

Programme Specification

1. Overview/factual information

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|---|---|
| Programme/award title(s) | BA (Hons) Counselling Studies Exit award – BA Counselling Studies |
| Teaching Institution | New College Durham |
| Awarding Institution | The Open University (OU) |
| Date of first OU validation | November 2016 |
| Date of latest OU (re)validation | N/A |
| Next revalidation | |
| Credit points for the award | 120 credits |
| UCAS Code | |
| JACS Code | |
| Programme start date and cycle of starts if appropriate. | September 2019 |
| Underpinning QAA subject benchmark(s) | Guidelines for preparing programme specifications (QAA 2006) UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part A: Setting and maintaining threshold academic standards, Chapter A3: The programme level (QAA 2011) The framework for HE qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) Qualifications and Curriculum Framework QAA Benchmark statement for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2013) BACP Accreditation of Training Courses (2009) |
| Other external and internal reference points used to inform programme outcomes. For apprenticeships, the standard or framework against which it will be delivered. | The programme is closely aligned to the QAA benchmark statement for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2013, Appendix 1). It is also referenced to the BACP Accreditation of Training Courses, including the core curriculum (2009, Appendix 2). There are no PSRB requirements for the programme. |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Professional/statutory recognition | No |
| For apprenticeships fully or partially integrated Assessment. | N/A |
| Mode(s) of Study (PT, FT, DL, Mix of DL & Face-to-Face) Apprenticeship | PT |
| Duration of the programme for each mode of study | 32 Weeks |
| Dual accreditation (if applicable) | N/A |
| Date of production/revision of this specification | 05/02/2019 |

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content, and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in student module guide(s) and the students handbook.

The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be verified by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

2.1 Educational aims and objectives

The overall aims of the programme are to:

- provide progression from the Foundation Degree in Counselling;
- provide further development opportunities for counsellors in line with BACP continuing professional development requirements;
- provide a safe and challenging atmosphere in which candidates are enabled to link theory to practice with the use of case study discussion, supervision, experiential work and self-directed research;
- give students the opportunity to study aspects of CBT and mental health and consider application to practice;
- encourage reflexivity regarding equality and diversity issues linked to practice;

- to provide graduates with a base from which to pursue a Masters degree in Counselling;
- to create high standards of competency in professional and ethical practice;
- to develop graduates who have transferable employment, communication, and information technology skills;
- to develop graduates who have an analytical and reflective understanding of Counselling and its relationship within a wider theoretical, socio-political and cultural context.

2.2 Relationship to other programmes and awards

(Where the award is part of a hierarchy of awards/programmes, this section describes the articulation between them, opportunities for progression upon completion of the programme, and arrangements for bridging modules or induction)

NCD provides students with a progression route which enables them to study counselling from level 2 to level 6. Progression to the BA (Hons) Counselling Studies is from students undertaking Foundation Degrees in Counselling and Level 5 Counselling Diploma students, from both New College Durham and other local colleges, as well as experienced practising counsellors. Additional support is provided for non-traditional applicants in relation to knowledge of research in the form of a pre-course study session and online material. Students are offered recognition of prior learning (RPL) mapping of previous qualification/experience to the entry requirements. All students undertake induction to both the college and the programme in the first few weeks of term. Students are asked to complete and sign an induction checklist on SCIPs. Absences in knowledge are followed up by tutors.

Students who graduate from the BA (Hons) Counselling Studies programme will possess and communicate those higher level skills in critical appraisal, analysis and research, reflexivity, flexibility, and innovation that are transferable to a range of contexts and which will present the graduate with employment opportunities. On exiting the programme students will have the ability to select, organise and interpret complex information which could lead to graduate positions in public, private and third sector counselling organisations. The qualification can also allow graduates to progress to study at Masters level.

Many students have secured employment following successful completion of the course; some have enhanced their current agencies' practice by conducting research for them and others have gone on to publish work explored in their research dissertation. A number have progressed to Masters degrees in Counselling and associated programmes. Of the last cohort to graduate there was 98% positive progression: 66% are in full time paid counselling employment or studying at masters level, 22% continued to work voluntarily in the

counselling sector and 10% have continued in higher education. The latter include specialist training in working with children and relationships. The cognitive, professional and transferable skills of the programme fit in with the need to provide a flexible, innovative and adaptive workforce for the future.

2.3 For Foundation Degrees, please list where the 60-credit work-related learning takes place. For apprenticeships an articulation of how the work based learning and academic content are organised with the award.

This section is not applicable.

2.4 List of all exit awards

On successful completion of all the modules on this programme (120 credits) students will obtain an award of BA (Hons) Counselling Studies.
Where students successfully complete the Developing Professional Practice, Planning the Primary Project and CBT and Mental Health modules (80 credits) they will obtain a contained award of BA in Counselling Studies.

3. Programme structure and learning outcomes

Intended learning outcomes at Level 6 are listed below:

| <u>Learning Outcomes – LEVEL 6</u> | |
|---|--|
| 3A. Knowledge and understanding | |
| Learning outcomes: | Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods |
| A1: Demonstrate and justify systematic understanding of the philosophical knowledge, theory and assumptions underpinning counselling and psychotherapy. | <p>These are addressed through lectures, seminars, group and pair discussion in class and on VLE, individual tutorials and directed study.</p> <p>Formative assessment is in the form of group supervision, written work, poster presentation and piloting of data collection methods. These are intended to help prepare the students for their summative assessments.</p> <p>Summative assessments are in the form of a written case study, research proposal, research dissertation, critical personal reflection, individual presentation and group documentary.</p> |
| A2: Analyse the ethical, legal, social and cultural factors which inform and influence the therapeutic relationship. | |
| A3: Evaluate a negotiated, self-managed research project relevant to counselling. | |
| A4: Relate comprehensive knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity to a counselling context. | |
| A5: Critically appraise the evidence base underpinning the practice of counselling. | |

| <u>Learning Outcomes – LEVEL 6</u> | |
|---|---|
| 3A. Knowledge and understanding | |
| A6: Critically reflect upon the limits of knowledge in relation to a therapeutic relationship. | |
| 3B. Cognitive skills | |
| Learning outcomes: | Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods |
| <p>B1: Synthesise and evaluate evidence from appropriate sources to make independent judgements.</p> <p>B2: Appraise complex problems and justify the application of appropriate knowledge relevant to counselling practice.</p> <p>B3: Demonstrate intellectual flexibility and openness to new ideas.</p> | <p>Cognitive skills are developed through group and pair discussions, question and answer, feedback to presentations and written work, and independent learning including use of the college's VLE. Schoology is employed for online discussion. Online academic talks and debates are also utilised. Critical thinking skills are addressed with the group by the HE Academic Tutor, as well as course lecturers and research supervisors. A variety of tools are used to assist in critical appraisal of research, including online analysis tools, such as Nvivo and SPSS.</p> |

| 3C. Practical and professional skills | |
|---|--|
| Learning outcomes: | Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods |
| <p>C1: Operate ethically in complex contexts requiring selection and application of appropriate methodology and research techniques.</p> <p>C2: Operate autonomously with limited supervision, to contribute effectively to generating sustainable argument and reaching reasoned conclusions within agreed guidelines.</p> <p>C3: Act autonomously with limited supervision when working with clients within agreed ethical and professional guidelines.</p> | <p>These learning outcomes are developed through group and pair discussion, formative feedback, peer feedback, personal journal records, counselling supervision and the completion of formative and summative case work assessments. The latter encourage critical application of theory to practice. Students will engage in observed skills practice of CBT. In addition, group and individual tutorials will support students' submission of application for ethical approval. Students will study independently abiding by the principles of the BACP guidelines on research and the New College Durham Ethics procedures. Students will access research supervision.</p> |

| 3D. Key/transferable skills | |
|--|--|
| Learning outcomes: | Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods |
| <p>D1: Engage effectively in academic discussion and debate.</p> <p>D2: Communicate clearly, fluently and effectively in a range of styles appropriate to the context.</p> <p>D3: Plan, manage and evaluate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.</p> <p>D4: Select and evaluate software applications for different tasks in counselling.</p> <p>D5: Recognise and evaluate the ability to work with others.</p> | <p>Students are given the opportunity to develop study skills through accessing support from HE Academic Tutors, Personal Learning Coaches, and tutorials with course tutors. Full group sessions are delivered by the HE Academic Tutors on a range of HE study skills. Ongoing support is also available through the library and the Student Support department. Formative feedback is also instrumental in the learning of these skills. Group discussions in class and on Schoology are employed. Skills practice and preparing the group documentary develop team working skills.</p> |

4. Distinctive features of the programme structure

- **Where applicable, this section provides details on distinctive features such as:**
 - where in the structure above a professional/placement year fits in and how it may affect progression
 - any restrictions regarding the availability of elective modules
 - where in the programme structure students must make a choice of pathway/route
- **Additional considerations for apprenticeships:**
 - how the delivery of the academic award fits in with the wider apprenticeship
 - the integration of the 'on the job' and 'off the job' training
 - how the academic award fits within the assessment of the apprenticeship

Programme Structure

Overview of structure of the modules across the Academic Year.

In order to qualify for the award students must complete all the core modules

Part time: One day per week

Overview of structure of the modules across the academic year.

| Semester 1 | Semester 2 |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Developing Professional Practice (30 credits) | CBT and Mental Health (30 credits) |
| Designing the Primary Research Project (20 credits) | |
| | Research Dissertation (40 credits) |

The programme will be delivered one day a week over 30 weeks.

All modules will have a taught component delivered through lectures and seminars. The Research Dissertation module will be the exception where learning will be largely addressed by dissertation supervision sessions and structured peer group support. Dates for supervision will be negotiated between the student and the supervisor. Other modules on the programme will require students to maintain and develop research and critical appraisal skills.

5. Support for students and their learning.
(For apprenticeships this should include details of how student learning is supported in the work place)

Support for Students and Their Learning

As this programme represents the final level of an undergraduate degree students will develop as independent learners. Students will be required to accept responsibility for meeting objectives that have been set with module tutors and to work ethically and responsibly with research participants, including counselling agencies. Support for students with these areas is available from course tutors. Some students also find valuable support from their counselling supervisor. Students are encouraged to maintain a journal throughout the course to record their personal and academic learning.

Marketing, interview, selection and admission procedures are consistent, fair and transparent and in line with QAA requirements. The web pages are updated to reflect the changes to the programme. The course information details precise academic prerequisites and vocational experience. Support for students commences at this enquiry stage where there is opportunity to attend HE events that focus upon progression and enable the students to explore their options and discuss in detail with course tutors the programme aims and objectives.

Throughout the student's journey individual student support can be provided through module academic tutorials, research supervision and through other learning support mechanisms such as the College's VLE. More general additional academic support is supplied by the Academic Support Tutor as well as the HE Advanced Personal Learning Coach; this may include, where necessary, advice on writing at degree level, time management, carrying out literature searches, examination/ assignment/ essay writing skills etc. Where specific support is required, students can access help from the Student Support Department.

6. Criteria for admission
(For apprenticeships this should include details of how the criteria will be used with employers who will be recruiting apprentices.)

Students seeking entry to the degree should normally hold a qualification in a cognate field, with a value of 240 credits, 120 at level 4 and 120 at level 5. This will normally be satisfied if applicants hold a Foundation Degree in Counselling, or alternatively a Counselling Diploma or equivalent. Applicants should also be engaged in counselling practice. While there is no requirement for students to accrue a specific number of counselling hours during the course, students will need to be engaged in regular practice throughout their time on the programme.

All applicants to the degree will be interviewed by a member of the teaching team. As part of the application process students are given a presentation of the programme, interviewed and required to complete a piece of written work. The written work is a formative assessment of academic ability and the interview provides an opportunity to identify and discuss any key issues that may impact upon their learning. The guidelines we use to help us to select our students are that we expect students to be able to benefit from their programme of study, fulfil its objectives and achieve the standard required for the award.

In addition, it is expected that applicants will demonstrate some of the standards prescribed in the BACP Ethical Framework. Students who otherwise satisfy the entry criteria may be unable to be admitted to the degree if there is sufficient reason to suggest that they do not adhere to these standards. Additional support is provided for non-traditional applicants in relation to knowledge of research in the form of a pre-course study session and online material.

7. Language of study

English

8. Information about non-OU standard assessment regulations (including PSRB requirements)

This section is not applicable.

9. For apprenticeships in England End Point Assessment (EPA). (Summary of the approved assessment plan and how the academic award fits within this and the EPA)

This section is not applicable

10. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning.

Student Voice

The College employs various mechanisms for capturing the student voice. These include module evaluations, online Induction and On Programme Surveys, student representative and student forum, and the National Student Survey.

At the end of each module students complete a module review form and comment on good practice and areas for development. Staff in response compile their report on student feedback on the modules. The team and College place importance on the NSS feedback. These results are reviewed at management level and discussed with course teams. Course representatives are asked to clarify responses to the HE Induction and on programme surveys with group and feedback to course tutors. Course team meetings are scheduled throughout the academic year to review the programme and there is student representation for each cohort at the team meetings. The team use these meetings as opportunities to report progress on issues raised by the students and to hear their views. Schoology is also used as a means of posting updates on progress made in relation to student suggestions. Student views and team responses are documented in the course annual report. Actions deriving from any student feedback are captured on the QEP and progress is reviewed quarterly at quality review meetings.

External Examiner

The assessment briefs are forwarded to the external examiner for external quality assurance at the start of each academic year and prior to being issued to the students. The team responds to feedback provided by the External Examiner on the assessment briefs, samples of student work and on standards and processes as detailed in the External Examiner's annual report.

Continuous Professional Development

The team remain vocationally relevant by engaging in weekly counselling practice. During the duration of the programme to date, lecturers have counselled in mental health, relationship issues and more general 1-1 counselling. One course member has carried out counselling supervision. All core members of the team are members of the BACP (British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy). One registered member is undertaking application for accreditation. As counsellors, the team members engage in five days counselling related CPD. The team also engage in five staff development days at New College Durham where teaching and learning topics are

addressed. One member of the team was recently awarded their Fellow of the HEA. These personal developments help to keep the content delivered to students current and accurate.

10. Changes made to the programme since last (re)validation

There have been no changes since the last validation. Proposed changes at re-validation are:

- the existing modules Aspects of the Therapeutic Relationship and Developing Own Integrative Approach focus on the practice of the student. These two modules have been amalgamated to create the module Developing Professional Practice. Approaching it as a single module encourages broader and more cohesive self-reflection and analysis;
- the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy module has been developed to create the CBT and Mental Health module. This includes specific content on mental health and the current climate regarding this. The new content addresses some of the bullet points under section 6.7 of the QAA subject benchmark document (2013) which was not addressed in the previous programme;
- the titles of the modules have been simplified to allow interested, prospective students to more quickly grasp the nature of the programme. In addition, the credit distribution across modules has been modified, so that four 20 credit modules and one 40 credit module has become one 20 credit module, two 30 credit modules and one 40 credit module. When the existing BA (Hons) Counselling students were consulted on the proposed programme, they all felt that the new structure looked more manageable;
- the interview process has been slightly modified. The group discussion will no longer be an element of the interview process. This is to ensure parity for all applicants, as it cannot be guaranteed that scheduled interview sessions are attended by a group.

Annexe 1 - Curriculum map

This table indicates which study units assume responsibility for delivering (shaded) and assessing (✓) particular programme learning outcomes.

| Level | Study module/unit | Programme outcomes | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|--|--------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | | A1 | A2 | A3 | A4 | A5 | A6 | A7 | A8 | B1 | B2 | B3 | B4 | B5 | B6 | B7 | B8 | C1 | C2 | C3 | C4 | C5 | C6 | C7 | C8 | D1 | D2 | D3 | D4 | D5 | D6 | D7 |
| 6 | Developing Professional Practice | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | |
| | Designing the Primary Research Project | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | |
| | Research Dissertation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| | CBT and Mental Health | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | |